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I am the strongest woman you know

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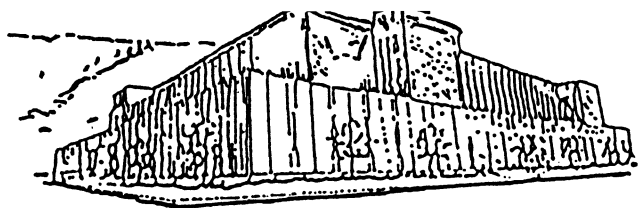
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I Am The Strongest Woman You Know

by Paula Payne

B.F.A. The Cooper Union, 1984

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

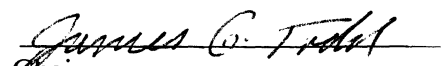
for the degree of


Master of Fine Art

The University of Montana

1998

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I. Introduction

My MFA thesis is called “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know”. This is a body of art work consisting of large oil paintings, ceramic tiles, and drawings. The phrase “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” had its roots as a personal joke. I often told people this in jest. However, the more I used this phrase and began noticing peoples’ responses, I realized it went deeper than just a personal joke. People enjoy the irony and humor of this phrase that absurdly presumes to know who the viewer knows. I see in their responses how the boldness of this phrase is empowering. Therefore, I am exploring the social, feminist, environmental, and personal aspects of “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” in this current body of work.

II. Historical Background

In this section I will address the artists and art traditions that have influenced my use of paint, clay, scale, and concept.

I credit a tiny landscape by Cezanne and a portrait of a woman by Dekooning in the Carnegie Museum as having taught me the use of paint. (Figure 1) I studied these two paintings in person for years, and they are the basis for my understanding of the language of paint. I appreciate the loose quality of the brush stroke and the thickness of the paint application in both paintings. The paint is almost like relief, alternately thin and very globular. This three dimensional aspect of the paintings’ surface appealed to me and remains in my work today as a desire for a non traditional textured or raised surface.

Both of these paintings exude the artists' love of painting, and for me that was contagious. These paintings appear to have been done quickly and vigorously working wet into wet with the oil paint. Working wet into wet oil paint continues to be my favorite way to paint. These paintings taught me not to control the medium to the point where you begin fighting what is inherent in the medium. This also holds true for my understanding of clay. I want to let the properties unique to clay show through and be an integral part of what I am saying.

The ceramic artist that I admired was Robert Arneson. I appreciated his mixture of portraiture, words, and humor. (Figure 2) I think humor is a wonderful element to employ and it is an integral part of my art. His work also appealed to my love of doing portraits. My background in clay is figurative. I sculpted full figures and heads with a variety of surface textures. Sculpting a face helped my two dimensional portrait work immensely. Constructing a face in clay and rendering how the muscles curve around the nose, for instance, has helped me translate the face to the flat plane of my paintings. I find it enjoyable and a challenge to capture a person or animal communicating a particular glance or expression. A face has the ability to engage and hold an audience. I studied the portraiture of Titian for his subtlety of expression and the delicate qualities of his skin tones. I have copied his "Man in a Red Cap" several times.

I enjoy and employ the ceramic tradition of the anagama or wood fired ceramics. Unlike painting, which I have been exposed to since I was a teenager, the art of wood fired ceramic is a new aesthetic for me. I love the idea that some aspects of the creative process are out of the artists' hands. I prefer the notion that nature or divine intervention

can help push the art work beyond what the artist had conceived to be possible. The lick of the flame inside the kiln, the wood ash, or the soda of the salt kiln all lend slight variables to the formula of finishing the sculpture. I enjoy this element of surprise and find that it is refreshing to relinquish some control.

My sense of scale is directly influenced by my love of theatrical design and painting, and the years I spent employed as a scenic artist for theater, film, and television. I was very moved by the largeness and grandeur of theatrical productions, and especially enjoyed the ones designed by painters like David Hockney, Marc Chagall, Ferdinand Leger, and Robert Rauschenberg. I found it very inspiring to see these painters crossing into the theatrical medium and employing their vision. I loved seeing their paintings come alive with motion as huge theatrical scenery. Painting for film and television means working alternately between a large scenic scale and a tiny camera close-up scale. This holds true for my work today. I enjoy working on a large scale and I enjoy working small. I find that the intense attention to detail necessary in small work and the physical energy needed to work on a larger scale seem to balance each other.

A large influence on my current body of work is the variety of Postmodern art I experienced daily during the years I lived in the East Village of Manhattan, 1979-1985. I still draw from this time period. Art was immediate and everywhere, street art, happenings, world class museums and galleries, films. Just walking down my street I would see guerrilla art, the Bread and Puppet theater storefront, Keith Haring drawings on the walls and in Fun Gallery, and the art studios and gallery of P.S.122.. This was the height of the East Village art scene and examples of Postmodern art were visible

everywhere.

For me, Postmodernism means any combination of traditional or non-traditional material can be considered in making art. This directly influences my employ of a variety of mediums to convey ideas. The conceptual and personal threads that run through my art are consistent, but the art mediums may vary. Postmodernism also means there are multiple perspectives and truths, and no single way to make or view art.

I saw so much art during this time period. Due to this volume, I learned to view things very quickly and rely on my physical impressions and feelings about the work to decide whether it spoke to me and I considered it good art. Some may call this the “je’ nas se qua”, truth, or the charisma of the piece. For me, it is a “real” art experience and it has a lot to do with how I view art and my art influences today. This time period was a very “real” time for me to soak in art, because it was firsthand. Seeing art in magazines or books rarely matches these real experiences, and as a result does not influence me as acutely. Therefore, my artistic influences are from this rich time many years past, while my personal influences are immediate and from the present. I will discuss more about my personal influences later in the paper.

The artists I mentioned before I considered as formal influences. Conceptually, I am drawn to artists and people who create themselves. Spalding Gray, Joseph Beuys, Cindy Sherman, Andy Warhol, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and my own grandfather have charismatically created personae or personal fictions. They are people who creatively molded themselves, into personae that transcended ego, often with love, humor, or irony. I find this behavior inspiring. (3) I admire the way they weave their personae into their

art. We become aware of Cindy Sherman's presence in her photograph as a constant, therefore she has created a bond of familiarity with her audience. (See Figure 4)

Spalding Gray has fostered the same bonding with his audience by sitting in front of them and sharing stories from his life. Even as we look forward to seeing these people and feel like we know them, we are aware of the fact they are entertaining us and what is being presented is art.

This is one aspect of "I Am The Strongest Woman You Know" that I am trying to do. I would like to allude to fact that there exists this persona of the strongest woman you know. She is not me, but perhaps she could exist as either a myth, or as a facet of every woman.

III. Materials and Technical Concerns

I was searching for a material to work with that satisfied me. In the past I had done mixed media painted wall constructions, ink drawings and oil paintings on canvas. The wall constructions were satisfying for a while, but were full of hard materials and became too cumbersome. I was looking for something similar to hang on the wall that could be part object part painting yet softer and less bulky. I enjoy painting on canvas, but find its traditional presentation to be static and boring. I experimented with soft fabric framing, (like a Tibetan Thangka painting) but did not quite come up with a successful solution.

In 1980, I went to the Joseph Beuys retrospective at the Guggenheim. I walked into the Guggenheim and there was a towering chunk of smelly lard that filled the entire rotunda. I had to rub my hands on it and get yelled at by the museum guards, but how

could one not? I loved his use of non traditional materials, chunks of felt, wax, lard, and found objects. I also enjoyed his implementation of a personal narrative that tied all these disparate objects together. I am employing “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” in this manner, as a unifying thread for various images and media. Postmodern artists Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer are known for a similar theme of, “The Message is the Medium”. (5) Beuys’ work invited interaction and therefore seemed theatrical to me. His ability to incite an audience with his ideas was spectacular.

During this graduate program, when I thought the Beuys exhibit was just an old memory, I had a very vivid dream of revisiting that show. I walked through it all over again in my dream, and awoke thinking about felt, one of Beuys’ mediums. I sat up in my bed and realized this was the answer to my search for a satisfying material to work with. I quickly associated felt with carpet padding, and went out the next day looking for carpet padding samples to paint on. This is what led to my use of carpet padding as a surface for paintings and as a texture for the ceramics.

I tried three carpet padding samples after I had the Joseph Beuys dream. The best was the old fashion “horse hair” padding. It is made of recycled fabrics, a hemp or jute type fiber, and some plastic. Painting on the carpet padding has been the closest solution so far. It is unusual, utilitarian, soft, and can be both an object and a painting. I especially like the gridded texture. It is a satisfying presentation. It hangs beautifully and squarely on the wall when hung with a one inch spacer from the top. Hanging emphasizes its object like quality as it looks slightly three dimensional and casts a shadow on the wall. (See Figure 6)

The drawbacks to the carpet padding are that it is rough and hinders my painting style. Perhaps there is more experimenting I can do in the preparation of the center circle to smooth it for painting, without becoming too heavy or prone to cracking. The main drawback for right now is that the padding is no longer available. It was discontinued some time ago and I was purchasing old stock that is now sold out. It has been replaced by foam rubber and a synthetic version that has no grid pattern. I was anxious to continue painting so in lieu of spending time searching for a new material I continued the series on canvas. It has been very fun painting on the smoother canvas but the same problem persists for me, of how to make a canvas presentation unique.

I choose to work in oils because I feel they provide the widest range and depth of color options. I also like to work paint wet into wet and, contrary to most people working with oils, am always trying to slow down the drying time.

Working in clay also satisfies my need for the pieces to have the object like quality. Clay is also soft and three dimensional yet can be worked in a rather two dimensional way. The clay actually gives me more options than the paint, especially with imprinting the gridded texture from the carpet padding onto the surface of the clay. With the freestanding and the wall tiles I can vary the angle of the gridded texture in relation to the orientation of the square. This adds more variety and interest to the pieces. The inherent nature of the clay adds another deep, rich element to this body of work. It adds the element of time. The tiles have an archeological feel, that of abiding and endurance. I like when the tiles crack, warp, or char in the firing due to the extreme heat. The material itself then illustrates one aspect of the phrase, strength. It becomes as if the concept, "I

Am The Strongest Woman You Know” has been around forever in stone buried in the earth. (See Figures 7 and 8)

The ceramic tiles are made by rolling slabs and pressing the slab onto a plaster bat that I have made with the texture of the carpet padding imprinted on it. The slab is removed and allowed to dry for a while. When the slabs are pre-leather hard I smooth the circle in the center. They are then trimmed into a loose square, of roughly twelve inches, for a wall hanging tile, or hand built into a flat square box. The boxes are freestanding and approximately fourteen inches square by five inches deep. As with the paintings, but even to a more heightened degree I like the process inherent with the clay to show. I like seeing the looseness of the slab construction, and the boxes’ resemblance to the shape of a piece of glass block is intentional. It gives it the utilitarian feeling of multiple uses and multiple lives, and adds an air of non preciousness. (As with the carpet padding)

These are then glazed and wood fired or salt fired. I am attracted to these firing processes because there is the element of divine intervention and surprise that the flames of the kiln can produce. Elements beyond my total control seem to yield much better results than too much control.

The phrase is usually applied afterwards, loosely stenciled, in a low fire glaze and re-fired in the electric kiln. With the ceramics the phrase is the image so it goes directly in the center for that symmetrical, meditative effect. Sometimes the phrase is applied as a high fire glaze or oxide and fired in the first firing. These results can be very drippy and beautiful. This process gives me the advantage to re-fire as many times as need be to get

the phrase right, although sometimes color richness is lost in the re-fire. A few tiles are totally low fired. I enjoy learning new technical information and experimenting with surfaces on the tiles. It is a challenge to work within the technical limitations of the material and of my own knowledge. One of my favorite glazes has been “Flash-o-pink”, a low fire pink glaze. For this reason I would like to experiment with and learn some higher fire pink glazes. I enjoy warm pink colors and feel they would go well with “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know”, because they would allude to the tradition of associating pink with girls. (See Figure 9)

The paintings are created by stretching canvas on the wall, gessoing it, and then drawing the circle in the center. I prefer to work on a hard surface rather than have the bounce of a canvas on stretchers. Carpet padding it is stapled to the wall and only the circle is gessoed. This takes several coats and must be a rather elastic gesso.

I then choose the animal I want to put into the painting. It can be a conscious choice. I would like to paint a six foot elephant nosed shrew for two reasons; the extremities of scale when the actual five centimeter long shrew is blown up to six feet; and the play on words of a shrew and woman. It could be a less conscious choice of painting a rather common mule deer doe, for reasons I was not sure of, only to realize after the painting was completed, that it was painted in the middle of hunting season and hunting is a philosophical issue I have been pondering. (See Figure 10)

After the animal is chosen I compose it in the circle. I choose the composition that fits the animal. Sometimes it will bleed out beyond the circle sometimes not depending on how it looks and the need for variation and interest. For example, the mule deer doe

had such a graceful swing to her long neck that I wanted to show it all within the circle, and only her chest downwards fell outside the circle. With the Musk Ox, I found the amount of the brown fur to be repetitious and uninteresting compared with the intensity of the horizontal eye pupil. Therefore, I chose to close in on the eye and let most of the fur fall outside the circle. (See Figure 11)

I work from stock photos, sketches, or personal photos. The under painting is done in acrylic to build up layers of rich color. Then I paint it in oils working from the background forward, in order to avoid the inevitable repainting if I start with the subject and move back. Often I find the back grounds are the most fun to paint as they are looser and less detailed. Background colors are chosen based on the animal, its colors, habitat, and gesture. I do not mind if the process of painting shows, in drips or drawing lines, as long as it does not detract from the intent of the piece. At some point the painting always develops a life of its own and begins to tell me what is needed. The phrase and possible sub-text is applied last. Its color, shape and size is dictated by the near finished painting and the attitude of the subject portrayed.

IV. Thesis

The genesis of this body of work stems back to my past hobby of weightlifting. My weightlifting heroes at that time were Arnold Schwarzenegger and Doris Barrilleaux. In 1993, I was in a small Buddhist monastery in a rural area of Burma. One room was covered from floor to ceiling with images of Buddhist saints and ritual offerings of delicately folded pinwheels of Burmese paper money. Nestled tightly among these was a

full size poster of Arnold Schwarzenegger from the movie “The Terminator”, with his dark sunglasses and shiny black gun. This seemed incongruous to me and I asked the monk about the Arnold poster. The monk smiled and curled his fists over his shoulders and said, “Arnold, very strong”. It was then I realized more of how connected all life is.

Arnold is an international symbol of strength, power, success, wealth, humor, etc.

“Arnold”, a western persona, on the wall next to an image of a Buddha, is truly an example of the Buddhist philosophy of the interconnectedness of all beings.

Emphasizing the interrelatedness and shared qualities of all life forms is one of the themes in my work. The small drawing of the two Arnolds and one painting of Arnold on carpet padding emerged from this experience and are the very first in the strongest woman series. (See Figure 12)

I have a disdain for the traditional rectangular format. Working in that shape never appealed to me. I am drawn to circles and squares. Squares are more balanced and symmetrical and therefore more soothing. I find it easier to compose inside a square than a rectangle. There is also an aspect of bucking tradition, and the rectangle, to me, speaks of a patriarchally dominated tradition of painting. I am also attracted to the simplicity of archetypal sensibilities found in symmetry.

I find circles are very evoking: roundness, love, Mandalas, the Japanese “Enso”. They are more frequently associated with the feminine. For me the circle relates to the idea of a single cell, or being a part of a bigger more complex entity. It can also act as a tool to focus the viewer’s attention on what is inside the circle.

However, I don’t feel content with the circle standing alone, as in a round canvas, I

feel it needs to be housed in the square. The two seem to make a completion. This is a basic archetypal format that shows up in Mandala painting from eastern cultures. The idea that what is in the circle has no boundaries is emphasized by having the square exterior boundary outside it.

I like repetitions or multiples. Repetitions act as a mantra. A mantra is a phrase that is recited over and over as an aid in focusing and calming the mind in a quest for greater clarity of thought. The use of the mantra aids the viewer in focusing on the subject; simultaneously emphasizing the similarities and differences of the pieces. Using multiples stresses the unique life energy of each repetition no matter how similar it is to the one next to it. As in the Zen Enso, where the same ink circle may be drawn one hundred times, each one is imbued by the artists' hand, the fine materials, and nature, with its own life. Joseph Beuys, Andy Warhol, and Eva Hesse used repetitions. (See Figures 13 and 14)

In multiples there is an element of chance, of knowing one and not the other. Multiples spread ideas and lead to a change in perception.

The phrase changes with the image but it is still the same phrase.

-Joseph Beuys (15)

This body of art work reflects a number of aspects of our society. I am hoping to question many things that we would consider societal standards, or ideals, such as gender roles and identification, and hierarchies of power and inherent value among humans and animals. Some of these societal concerns seem to be at odds with the idea that all life forms are interrelated. This is an ongoing and dynamic process as our society changes,

and all its members struggle to define themselves and their relationships to each other within society.

I do not believe it is considered a normal aspect of a woman's behavior in our society to be in your face, boldly confrontational, declaring anything in the superlative, let alone that she is "the strongest woman you know". Obviously, since the revolution of the women's movement has been going on for thirty years now, women are being bold and speaking out, but I still feel that society attaches a stigma to outspoken women. Society reacts differently to an outspoken woman that it does to an outspoken man. (16)

I think of it as the same stigma if a man in our society were to declare "I Am The Weakest Man You Know". This is the origin of the diptych, "I Am The Strongest Woman You Know, I Am The Weakest Man You Know". How many men would feel comfortable standing up and saying this? A man is conditioned not to admit weakness, just as a woman is conditioned to not admit strength. Women have long been called the weaker sex and men have been termed the stronger and both have had to accept this societal norm. A woman is taught to give away her power, not to own it, yet alone advertise that she owns it.

"I Am The Strongest Woman You Know" questions our personal and societal definitions of strength. There are many aspects of strength; physical, emotional, character, mental. Eastern philosophy often refers to opposites like strength and weakness as yin and yang, or two different sides of the same coin that cannot exist without each other. I enjoy the Taoist example of the water that yields to everything in its path, but eventually wears down solid rock.

The times in my life when I have felt the strongest are when I have given myself over completely out of weakness. -anonymous respondent to the “Strongest Woman Survey” (17 and 18)

This summer I did a small survey and asked women to write “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” on a piece of paper and tell a story about why they are strong. Every survey I got back, had a story about why these women considered themselves strong, but a fifth of the women surveyed said they were not comfortable writing that phrase. None of these women denied their strength, they wrote wonderful examples of it, yet some could not plainly state they were the strongest woman you know. I think this is some evidence of our socialization of language. A bold statement using the superlative form of the word “strong” made some women uncomfortable. Superlatives are associated with competition and being the best at something. Women show anxiety about competition whereas men are socialized to be more competitive and to enjoy it. (19) Does “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” create such a response because it is declaring a woman’s strength in a male language?

I have always felt the deepest kinships and loyalties to women, but in thinking and writing about this I have come to realize that most people I consider influences or heroes are male. However, I am beginning to think it does make sense conceptually as to the development of this work. I believe with this phrase I am speaking in a male language.

As follows, this is also about questioning identity and creating one’s self. This involves: creating the persona of the strong woman, establishing who the “I” is in the phrase, and sub-texts that define facets of an individual. “I Am A Chinese Woman

Named Lai”, and “All My Heroes Are Megalomaniacs” are examples of sub-text within the “Strongest Woman” series.

I like the ambiguity of the “I” in the phrase. I hope that it makes the viewer ask who is talking or from whose point of view is this coming. Is it the painting or the tile talking? Is it the deer or the bird? Is it the artist? Is the viewer? (See Figure 20) The viewer has to decide who is the “I” and who is the “You” in the statement. This engages the audience and breaks down the barricades of who is the observer and who is the observed.

The phrase itself is absurd. “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” elicits a response. It is confrontational and in your face, yet absurd enough so that no one can walk away without reacting to it in some way. The phrase is inherently false; I can not possibly say who you know. The viewer is confronted with an illogical yet lovable statement.

I have addressed the definition of “strength” and “I” in the phrase, so now I will discuss the definition of “woman”. Simply, I chose to say the phrase from the women’s point of view because I am a woman and as such can only truly speak from my own experience. Trying to address this phrase or this subject from a male point of view, felt false to me, or tried on. Addressing this from the “human” point of view, i.e. “I am the strongest human you know” seemed very watered down and “New Age” to me.

“Woman” was more truthful and provocative, and carried with it the historical weight of woman as traditional subject matter in art. This is a rich art historical pool to draw from. It compliments our current cultural views of woman, and our own experiences, when

visualizing the word woman.

As humans we label things to help us understand them. This includes labeling other living beings, language, gender, and labeling oneself. With these paintings I am trying to shake up some of the labels, and make them either absurd, ambiguous, humorous, or ironic, so that the viewer must rethink their own silent labeling. I am striving to add an element of surprise by mixing up elements, i.e. an elk telling you she is a strong women. Surprise makes the observer pay attention to the present moment while they ponder why they were caught off guard. Whatever can make one totally aware of the present moment, however fleeting, has left a lasting impression.

I have used animal imagery in art for many years. It began with an admiration for insect forms and colors, and moved on to using extinct and endangered animals. I prefer working with images of extinct or endangered animals because they allude to the fragility of all life forms, including humans. (See Figure 21) However, I am very influenced by my immediate surroundings, and the use of animals found in the American northwest is a direct result of living in Montana the past four years. I love observing animal behavior and spend a lot of time sketching them in the wild.

Another reason I anthropomorphize animals is to emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings. Portraying an intimidatingly oversized Musk Ox with an almost shamefully averted glance declaring she “has a tattoo in a bad place”, forces the viewer to confront their own humanity and the humanity of the animal depicted. (See Figure 11) The use of animals in art work stresses a sense of compassion, toward the animals and toward other humans including oneself. (22)

Western society has created a hyper separation between animals and humans, and nature and humans, that most people accept, (so that we can use them to serve our needs). It is a hierarchical construct that does not exist in this form in all societies. By playing with that hierarchy in these paintings it may be easier to view our own labeling and ranking more objectively.

If one regards ones self as superior, equal, or inferior by reason of the body, which is impermanent, painful, and subject to change, what is this but not seeing tings as they are? If one regards oneself as superior, equal, or inferior by reasons of feelings, perceptions, volitions, or consciousness, what else is this but not seeing things as they are?

If one does not regard oneself as superior, equal, or inferior by reason of the body, the feelings, perceptions, volitions, or consciousness, what is this but seeing things as they are? -From the discourses of the Buddha, Knanda-Samyutta, #49 (22)

The paintings also function on an environmental or “eco-feminist” level. The mule deer painting is a good example of a very frail looking part of nature, with her long wispy neck, deceiving her fragility by declaring she is the strongest woman you know. (See Figure 10) This painting is reminiscent of peering through a hunter’s scope so it may also be a direct challenge to the viewer, as a human that would pray on her, as we pray on nature and its resources.

Here is a link between animals and feminism. In our society both have a lower status and varying degrees of less power. Both are under represented, and often cannot speak for themselves. In western philosophy, women have been associated with the natural realm, i.e. animals.

An important aspect of the image is its attitude. I want to display a depth of attitude

in a single glance. This may encompass a range of emotions, but must always be overlain with wisdom and compassion, as I consider these to be of utmost importance. The head is cocked and confrontational, the gaze is fixing, almost as if the Raven or the little girl could implant an idea right into your head with no words at all. The face should be confrontive, yet possess tenderness. I want the painting to engage the viewer through the animals eyes and not let go. When the Raven's gaze does let go the phrase will take over, and keep the audiences attention pondering the relationship of the words and the image.

One of the main reasons I am fond of this phrase is because it is POSITIVE! I prefer a no victim approach. I am weary of the topic of the subjugation of women. My favorite feedback from the "I Am The Strongest Woman You Know" paintings has been from the women who look at the art and their immediate response is, "No she's not, I am." I loved hearing that. That is what I am after. Taking the positive approach makes sense to me. It has been suggested to me to use the counter phrase "I Am Not The Strongest Woman You Know", (ironically, by women, which goes back to what I was saying about using language that people are comfortable with). My gut response to that is a big NO! That is fundamentally not what it is about. I guess that is another example of how I am saying this in a male language, my refusal to admit weakness. Intellectually, I can see how "I Am Not The Strongest Woman You Know" may counter illustrate or clarify some these ideas in the art work, but I also feel that "I Am The Strongest Woman You Know" already implies its own opposite.

Another reason why I like a positive approach is that I do believe in some underlying universalisms for all living beings. I believe that if an idea is floating around in the

universe it has the ability to touch everyone. I hope “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” helps people to recognize their own strengths and declare them. I have seen a few announcements of being the strongest woman in the world, but the “YOU KNOW” part of the phrase personalizes it, and makes it so many people can claim it together. I never said I was the strongest woman in the world, I said, “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know”.

V. Conclusion

“I Am The Strongest Woman You Know” has become a kind of mantra for me in this body of art work. This could be why I haven’t tired of saying, “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know”. Each repetition expands my concept of who I am, as a person, and as an artist. Making art work aids me in defining my role in society, and the universe. I hope through this process, my concept of self could expand so that it encompasses all beings. Perhaps it can awaken and enable everyone to voice their own strengths and say, “I Am The Strongest Woman You Know”.

I Am The Strongest Woman You Know

VI. End Notes

1. DeKooning, (fig. 1)

2. Robert Arneson, (fig. 2)

3. This is where the phrase “All My Heroes Are Megalomaniacs” comes from. I wonder if the aforementioned people in the text could be considered possessing varying (unpathological) degrees of megalomania? If a megalomaniac’s driving force is good, humor, or love, as opposed to hate, might it be worthwhile? The dictionary definition for megalomania is, “A childlike feeling of omnipotence, especially when persisting into adulthood.” I find this very interesting as artists, especially of the modern movement have discussed at length about getting back to the stage of childhood naivete or innocence. Childhood, the primitive, the intuitive are often viewed as role models or goals for the creative mind.

From childhood onward the creative individual is captivated by his experience of the unitary reality of childhood.... and we cease to marvel that the creative man should remain fixated in this stage and its experiences.
-Arthur Schopenhauer

4. Cindy Sherman, color photograph, (fig. 4)

5. Statement by Barbara Kruger

6. Carpet padding detail, (fig. 6)

7. Anagama fired ceramic tile, Paula Payne, 1997, (fig. 7)

8. Anagama fired ceramic tile, Paula Payne, 1997, (fig. 8)

9. Low fired ceramic tile, Paula Payne, 1998, (fig. 9)

10. Mule Deer Doe, Paula Payne, 1997, (fig. 10)

11. I Have A Tattoo In A Bad Place, Paula Payne, 1998, (fig. 11)

12. Two Arnolds, Paula Payne, 1997, (fig. 12)

13. Drawing, Paula Payne, 1998, (fig. 13)

14. Eva Hesse, (fig. 14)

15. Beuys, Joseph, Multiples
16. Gilligan, Carol, A Different Voice, page 17
17. Anonymous reply to the “Strongest Woman” survey
18. “The times when you are suffering can be those when you are the most open, and where you are extremely vulnerable can be where your greatest strength really lies...Suffering can teach us all about compassion. If you suffer you will know what it is like when others suffer. And if you are in a position to help others it is through your own suffering that you will find the understanding and compassion to do so.” -Sogyal Rinpoche
19. Gilligan, Carol, A Different Voice, page 14
20. Raven, Paula Payne, 1998, (fig. 20)
21. Extinct Condor Skeleton, Paula Payne, 1998, (fig. 21)
22. Cartoonist Gary Larson does this quite well with his portayal of “Anihumans and Humanimals”
23. Discourses of the Buddha

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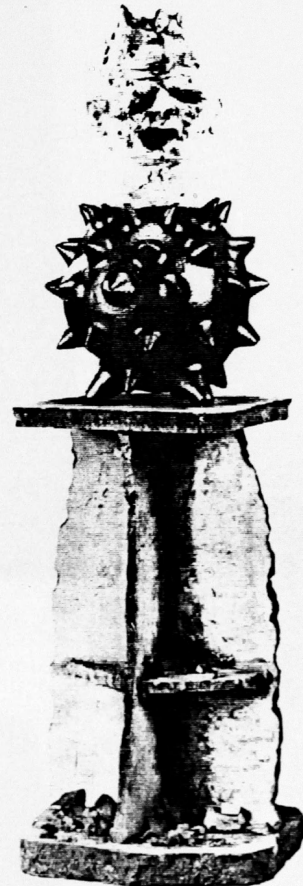
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Willem de Kooning. *Woman I*. 1950-52. Oil on canvas. 6'3¼" x 58". Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase.

fig. 1



fig. 2



Robert Arneson: *Head Mined*, 1982-83, glazed ceramic, 78 by 25 by 24 inches.

fig. 12

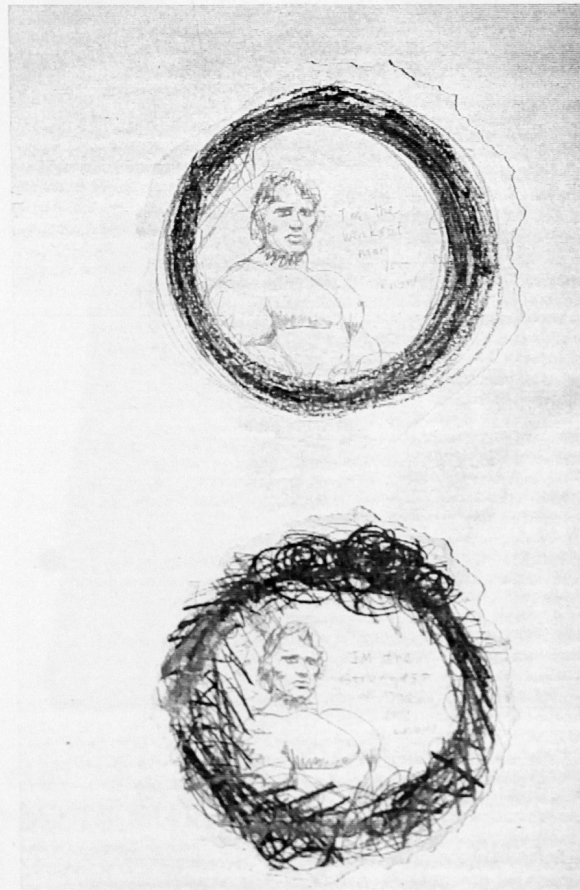




fig. 4

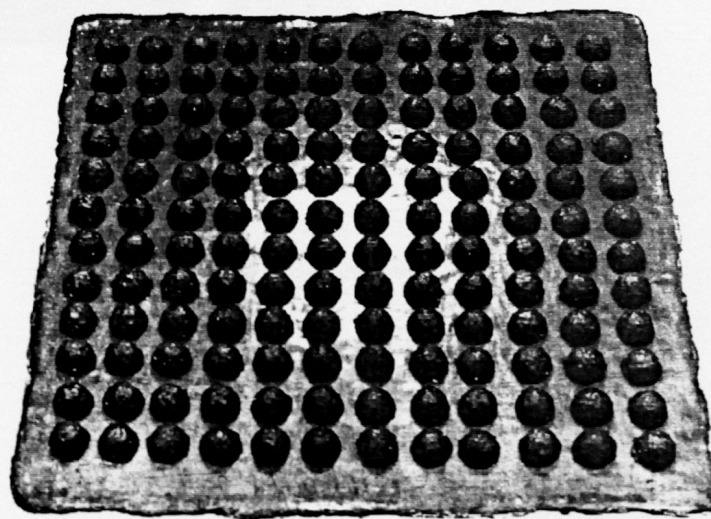


fig. 14 Eva Hesse, *Schema*, 1967, latex, 42 × 42 in. (106.7 × 106.7 cm.). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Paul Todd Makler.



fig. 6



fig. 7

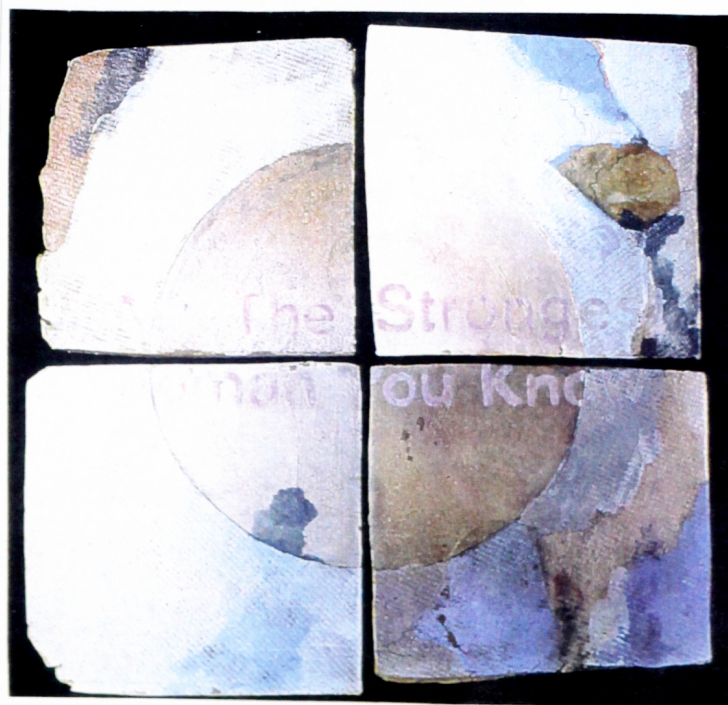


fig. 8

fig. 13



fig. 20



fig. 21

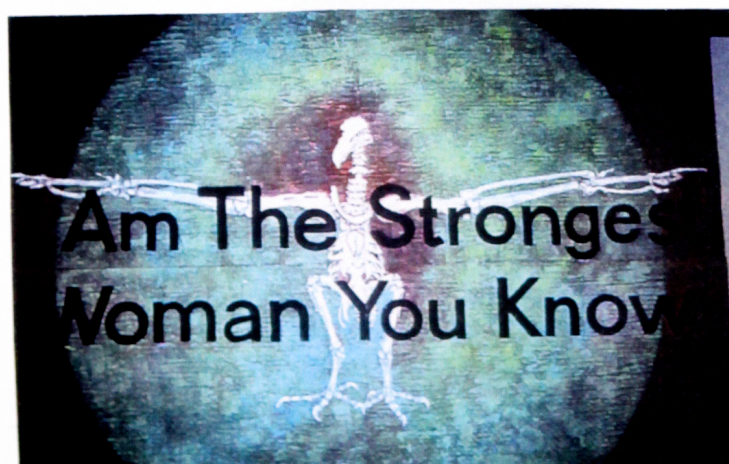




fig. 11

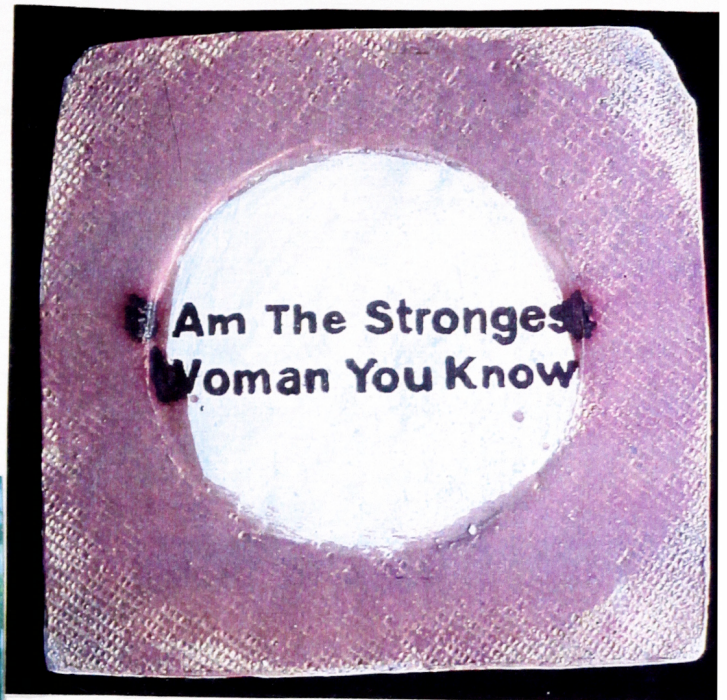


fig. 9

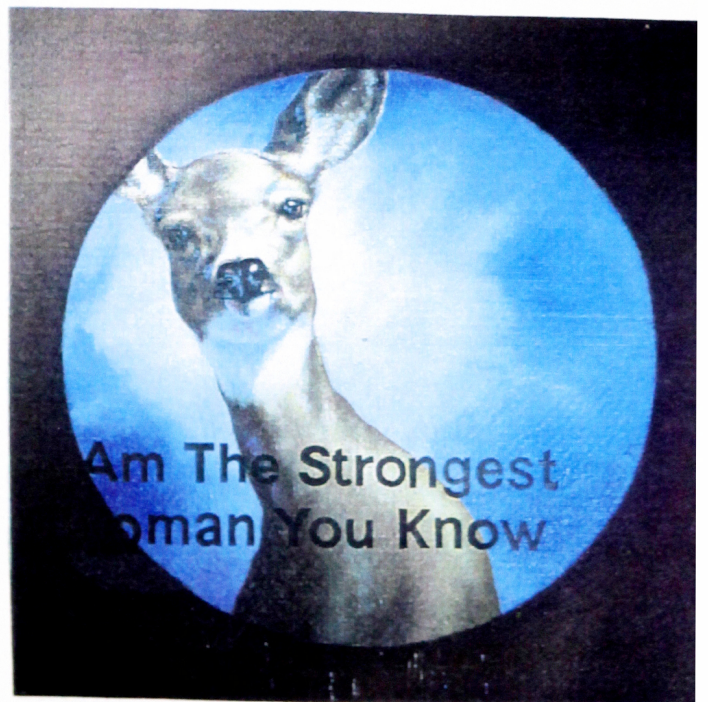


fig. 10